

"JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH."

A SERMON

PREACHED

ON SUNDAY MORNING, JAN., THE 24TH, 1864,

IN

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON, C.W.

BY

THE VEN. I. HELLMUTH, D.D.,

Archdeacon of Huron, Assistant Minister

OF

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

AND

PRINCIPAL AND DIVINITY PROFESSOR

OF

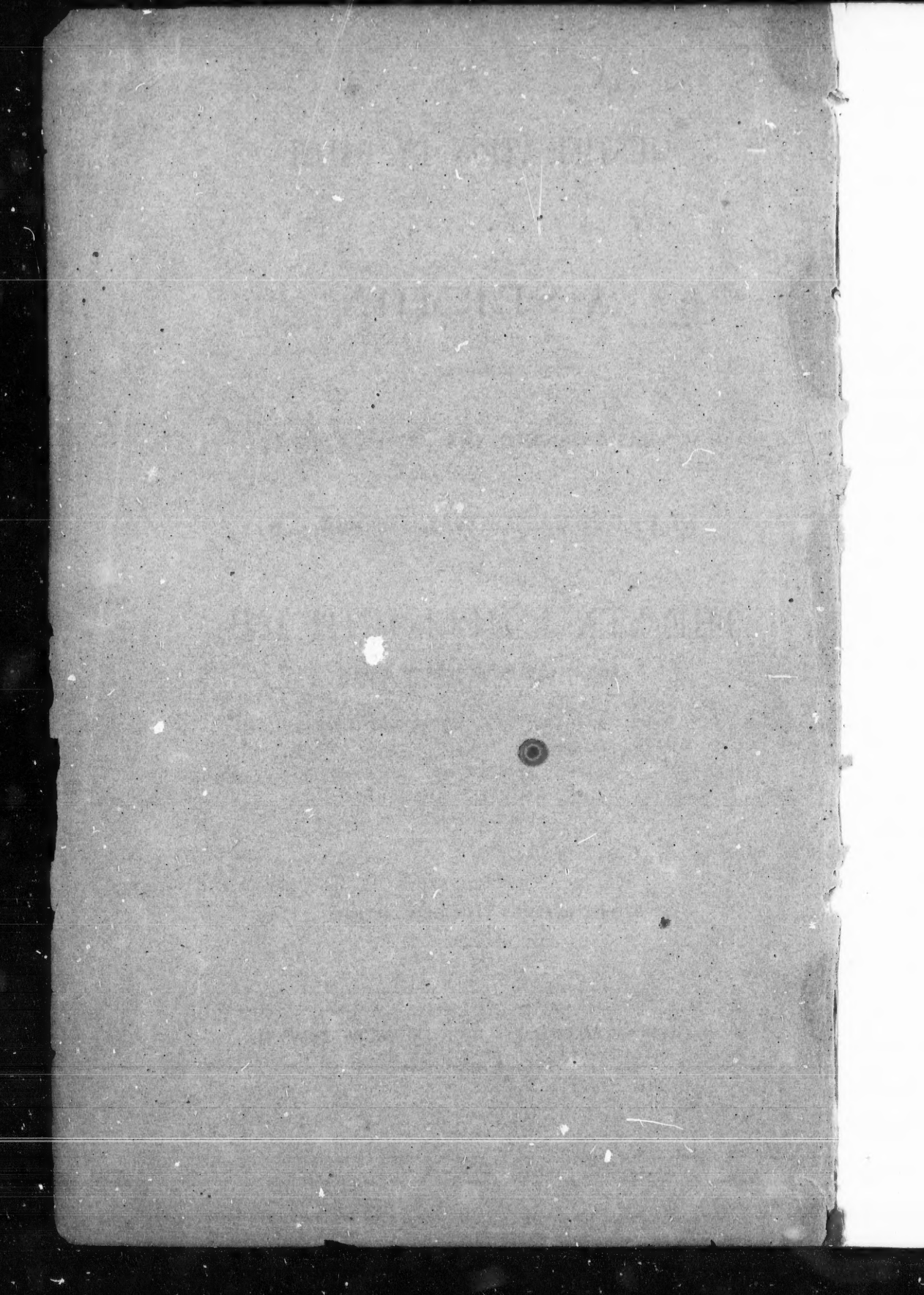
HURON COLLEGE.

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LONDON, 25th January 1864.

THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON HELLMUTH, D. D.

VEN. SIR: We the undersigned, regarding the Sermon preached by you in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday last, as peculiarly seasonable in the present times, and highly valuable for its sound *Scriptural* teaching, respectfully request you to allow the same to be published.

BENJ. BAYLY,
J. SHANLY,
W. WATSON,
H. C. R. BECHER,
CHAS. MONSARRAT,
H. CHISHOLM,
A. H. VENNOR.
J. HAMILTON,
J. L. DAMPIER,
FRED. ROWLAND,
THOS. PHILIPS,
&c., &c., &c.

—:O:—

HURON COLLEGE, Jan. 27th, 1864.

GENTLEMEN:

I hardly feel myself at liberty to decline compliance with your request to allow the sermon I preached on Sunday last in St. Paul's Cathedral to be published. I am conscious of its very many defects, and I can only pray that this feeble effort in advocating what I believe to be God's truth, may be abundantly blessed to the good of souls.

I am gentlemen,

Yours very faithfully,

I. HELLMUTH.

The REV. B. BAYLY, B. A.

J. SHANLY, Esq.

W. WATSON, Esq.

&c., &c., &c.

"JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ONLY."

—:O:—

ST. JAMES II. 24.

**"Ye see that by Works a Man is Justified and not by
Faith Only."**

—:O:—

The words just read to you are frequently quoted by those who are opposed to the doctrine of *free grace*, for the purpose of neutralizing, and sometimes for the purpose, of ridiculing the doctrine of "*justification by faith only*," which the XI. Article of our Church declares to be "a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort."

I have selected the text with a simple view of showing the perfect harmony that subsists between the teaching of St. Paul and that of St. James, on the doctrine of a sinner's justification before God.

But before I touch upon the apparent difference, between the

teaching of these Apostles, I desire to make a few preliminary remarks, and to direct your earnest attention to a few passages of Scripture, which reveal in distinct language the way by which a sinner becomes justified in the sight of God. And may the Spirit of truth be present with us, that we may receive the truth in the love of it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

The doctrine of "justification by faith only," without works,—on account of what Christ has done and suffered in our stead,—is a fundamental truth, clearly and distinctly revealed in the Word of God; it carries in its train the doctrines of the entire corruption and depravity of man by the fall, and regeneration and sanctification by the special operation of the Holy Spirit. And yet no doctrine of the Christian system has been involved in greater controversy, or more diversely propounded than this fundamental truth of the Gospel.

You will readily admit, that it is a subject of vital importance, which most deeply concerns us all, and upon the decision of which depends the answer to one of the most momentous questions, "How can a man be just with God?" Can he by good works earn the favor of God? Or, can he by a *union of faith and good works*, secure his salvation?

Man is corrupt; a sinner, and in open rebellion against God, and at enmity with Him, and when convinced of this, he naturally enquires with anxious solicitude: "What must I do to be saved?" Taught by the Spirit of God, that neither tears nor repentance, nor good works can atone for his sins, nor can future obedience remove the curse which hangs suspended over every one that "continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them," Oh, how gratefully and eagerly does he receive the Apostolic announcement: "*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;*" "*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*"

Conscious that he is "unclean," and that all his righteousness,—

in the words of the Prophet Isaiah,—is “as filthy rags,” and therefore unable to endure the scrutinizing eye of Him, who cannot behold iniquity, and “who chargeth even his own angels with folly,” most gladly does he submit to, and embrace “the righteousness which is of God by *faith*, even through the *faith* of Christ.”

There are some, who trust to gain the favor of God and obtain everlasting life, in virtue of their good works only.

There is another class, by no means an insignificant one, in point of numbers, (indeed, a very large portion of nominal Christians,) who rest, most unscripturally, their hopes for acceptance with God, upon good works and *faith united*.

And there is a third class, who, conscious of their innate corruption, and of their utter inability, to obtain salvation by anything they can do, or, are able to perform, rest their hopes for eternal life, upon simple *faith*, in the atonement of Christ, and upon that alone.

It is more to the second class,—the nominal Christian,—that I would address myself this morning, as we are persuaded, that there is hardly one in this congregation who would presume for one moment, to build his eternal hopes for acceptance with God, on the merits of his own works. And, yet, in our age, when talent and learning, in, and out of the Church, unblushingly stand forward, and in the face of God's word, endeavor to gainsay the divine plan of salvation through faith in Christ; when faith in the Atonement is excluded from the system of those, who have been driven to deny the inspiration of the Scriptures, or driven to pervert the Oracles of God, it is not out of place, should there be here, even one single soul that has been inoculated with this insidious, growing, and deadly poison, that we should solemnly and affectionately entreat such an one, to consider his dangerous condition, if happily the Lord may be gracious to him, and lead him in the way everlasting.

I would here observe, that it is just as erroneous and fatal, to think that we can be saved by a *mixed* process of *working* and *believing*, as it is, that we can be justified by *works only*.

To the careless and worldly-minded such a doctrine may have, and no doubt has, a plausible attraction; but to such who take the Word of God for their guide, it is at once discovered to be in direct opposition, to God's plan in effecting the sinner's salvation; it stands forth as a living proclamation of man's folly, conceit, and unbelief, so long as it is written in God's Word: "If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work."*

Oh how thankful ought we to be, my brethren, that the Sacred Writers have with such remarkable clearness set forth the truth on this all important topic. The confusion or misrepresentation of the doctrine in question, is but an illustration of what the Spirit of God has said in respect to the blindness of the natural man: "Neither can he know them (i. e. the things of God) because they are spiritually discerned."

Where the doctrine of "justification by faith" is scripturally taught, believed, and received, there religion becomes a practical living principle; exhibiting itself, in all that will promote the glory of God and the good of souls. And in proportion as this precious truth is obscured or perverted, Formalism, and Rationalism will abound.

That this doctrine so "full of comfort" is in perfect unison with the mind of God, let me now direct your serious attention to a few passages of Scripture:

In the first chapter of Rom. 16 v., St. Paul declares his reason why he is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, he says: "It is the power of God unto salvation," but to whom it might be asked? To him that *worketh* for his justification? Nay: the

* Romans xi 6.

Apostle in the same verse tells us: "to every one that *believeth*." And that this is not a newly invented doctrine,—as a mean to salvation,—but God's eternal plan of saving sinners, the Apostle adds, "as it is written" by the Prophet Habakkuk: "*the just shall live by faith.*"

While in the 3d Chap. of the same Epistle it is distinctly declared that "by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight," to our comfort it is added that "the righteousness of God without the law is manifested; even the righteousness of God *by faith* of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that *believe*;" and again, the sinner is "justified *freely* by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation *through faith* in his blood—that he might be just and the justifier of him that *believeth* in Jesus." The Apostle then asks: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of *faith*." Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by *faith* without the deeds of the law."

This "wholesome doctrine and full of comfort," is further illustrated by the Apostle in a striking example of the Patriarch Abraham: "If Abraham," he says, "were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God," and to establish this truth more firmly, he appeals to the Scriptures of God: "What saith the Scripture?" Yes, what does it say?—"To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."—"To the Scriptures then, not, what does this or that man say, not, what does this or that Church teach, and maintain on this or any other doctrine of the Bible, but what does the infallible Word of God reveal? Let the Scriptures speak: "Abraham, as it is written, (in Gen. xv. 6.) *believed* God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness," and hence the Apostle argues: "Now to him that *worketh*" (i. e. that worketh for his justification in the sight of

God) "is the reward not reckoned of *grace*, but of *debt*; but to him that worketh not, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the *ungodly* (mark, that justifieth the *ungodly*), his *faith* is counted for righteousness." Rom. iv. 4, and 5.

Further, to illustrate this, the Apostle quotes another example: "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God *imputeth* righteousness without *works*, saying: blessed are they whose iniquities are *forgiven*, and whose sins are *covered*. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not *impute* sin."

What striking illustrations of the doctrine of "*justification by faith only*," are here exhibited by the Apostle! Abraham, "the friend of God," and David, "the man after God's own heart," are both justified, not by works but by *faith*.

Having such scriptural examples before us, let us beware of seeking to be justified before God by any other way. Our eternal happiness hinges and depends upon our adopting this plan of salvation, which God in His infinite love has made known unto us in his revealed Word.

There can be no compromise between good works and faith, as *unitedly* constituting a sinner's justification before God. Happy for us that the Word of God is so plain on this important and vital question. If salvation from first to last were not wholly and altogether independent of man's righteousness, works, and merits, I ask what hope is there for fallen and corrupt man?

We have only to look into our own hearts and see the plague-spots within us, and we shall be constrained to cry out: "Unclean, unclean;" "that in us, that is to say in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." With such a knowledge of self, man might well despair of obtaining salvation by anything he can do, or is able to perform.

No wonder that our Church authoritatively declares: "We are accounted righteous before God, *only for the merits of our*

*Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings ; wherefore that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine and full of comfort, as more largely expressed in the Homily of Justification.**

Let us now proceed to consider the words of our text, in which we find St. James *apparently* differing from his brother Paul.

"Ye see then," says St. James, "how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only."

We shall endeavor to show, though briefly, yet I trust clearly and satisfactorily, that there is a sense in which this is true also, and at the same time in perfect harmony with the teaching of St. Paul.

The Student of the Bible, whenever he finds a statement apparently contradicting some other portion of the word of God, is bound with scrutiny and assiduity critically to examine the context, that he may discover where the supposed discrepancy lies, and thus be enabled to show the harmony of the doctrines contained in God's Word. In the instance before us, instead of their being a contradiction, there is rather a confirmation of the doctrine of St. Paul.

St. James alluding to the faith of Abraham says, in the verse preceding our text : "Abraham's *faith* was imputed unto him for righteousness." In this you see both are agreed.

The *supposed* difference embodied in the text lies in this : St. Paul is speaking of *faith* as in the sight of *God*—as a mean of a sinner's acceptance with God. While St. James is speaking of the *effects* or *evidence* of faith in the sight of *man*. St. Paul is speaking of the *cause* of a sinner's justification ; St. James of the *effect* of justification. This is still more clear from the 14th verse, to the end of the chapter, from which my text is taken : where St. James demonstrates the *emptiness* of a *mere profession of faith*, not evidenced by corresponding fruit, and he distinguishes

* XI. Article "of the Justification of man."

here a *saving faith* from a *false* one, by the following illustration : "What doth it profit my brethren, though a man *say* he hath faith, and have not works? Mark the word *say*, for much of force lies in the word *say*: "If a man *say* he hath *faith* "can faith" [the original has the article before faith] such faith, as he only *says* he has, can that save him? Is that a *saving faith*? Surely the mere *saying*, a man hath faith cannot save him; that kind of *professional* faith will not avail. Hence St. James says, the devils have faith—"they believe and tremble." He that is in *possession* of a saving faith in Christ, will manifest in his whole deportment that he "is passed from death unto life;" that he "is a new creature," and is delivered from condemnation. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." What, to them who simply *say* they believe? Surely not so. The Apostles perfectly agree in the matter of *faith* and *its fruits*—to them is "no condemnation in Christ Jesus, *who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*," in other words, who manifest in their lives, that *their faith* is not a mere empty profession, but a "faith which worketh by love."

The whole of this is made still more clear, if we take into consideration the respective parties which the Apostles addressed: St. Paul was speaking to those who had "confidence in the flesh," who trusted in the works of the law for their justification. St. James addressed those who had a *barren faith*—who had the faith of the devils—in which they trusted nevertheless, for their acceptance with God, while they were strangers to the characteristics of a living faith in Christ.

The justifying faith of which we speak, and for which we contend, "is the gift of God," which exhibits itself in a holy, living, and active principle.

We trust, this simple explanation of the supposed difference

between the two Apostles is clear, and commends itself to the judgment of all present.

As to *works* in the scheme of Gospel redemption, our Church in her 12th *Article* is equally clear. She teaches. "Good works follow *after* justification," i. e., a justifying faith produces good works. The fruit does not render the tree productive, but the tree *being productive*, causes the fruit. May the Spirit of God teach us to understand the *place* and *use* of good works.

Good works will never bring us to Christ. But having a living faith in Christ, cannot but produce good works to the praise and glory of God. Hence the Apostle Paul says: "As then, ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and please God, so we beseech you that ye would abound yet more and more." "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *good works*, which God had before ordained that we should walk in them."

While the doctrine of justification by faith is most honoring to God, you will readily admit, that it is not only the most comforting, but the most scriptural, and therefore, the *only* safe way of "being accepted in the beloved."

It is reported that even Cardinal Bellarmine—that great advocate for justification by works—had said: "On account of the uncertainty of the present life, it is most safe to rely on Christ alone."

Bishop Burnet says: "Justification is the admission of a man into the favour of God by a mere act of grace, or upon some consideration not founded on the holiness or merit of the person himself." The learned Bishop Horsley well observes: "Justification by faith, is the very corner-stone of the *whole* system of redemption." *

The great and excellent Archbishop Usher says: "We may take notice, that there is no comfort to a Christian soul, like that which floweth from this well of salvation, this sweet doctrine of

* Bishop Horsley's Charge, 1790.

"justification. Here we have assurance of the sufficiency of our redemption. That soul must be thoroughly acquitted, that is interested in such a righteousness; that debt must be fully discharged, that hath such a price laid down for it. * * * *
 "The righteousness of Christ is complete and perfect, that is our main joy and crown of rejoicing—to be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, but that which is in him, and made ours by God's gracious account."

That this was the doctrine and belief of our Reformers, and is so still of our most eminent divines, no one who is at all acquainted with their writings can doubt. Bishop Horsley says: "That man is justified by faith, without the works of the law, was *the uniform doctrine of the first Reformers*. It was a far more ancient doctrine, it was the doctrine of the whole College of the Apostles; it is more ancient still; it was the doctrine of the Prophets; it is older than the Prophets it was the religion of the Patriarchs." That doctrine, as has been well observed is, "the Jewel of the Reformation," in defence of which men of God were martyred, and for the truth of which they bled and burnt.

The great German Reformer, Martin Luther said: "If this article of justification be lost, then is all true Christian doctrine lost with it." And he makes "this Article of faith the test of a standing or falling Church." The following memorable words of this noble and bold Reformer are not less striking: "I Martin Luther, an unworthy preacher of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, thus profess and thus believe, that this Article, that *faith alone, without works*, can justify before God, shall never be overthrown, neither by the Emperor, nor by the Turk, nor Tartar, nor Persian, nor Pope, with all his Cardinals, Bishops, Sacrificers, Monks, Nuns, Kings, Princes, powers of the world, nor yet by all the Devils in Hell. This article shall stand fast, whether they will or no. This is the true Gospel: Jesus Christ redeemed us from our sins, and he only. This

"most firm and certain truth, is the voice of Scripture—though
 "the world and the devil may rage against it. If Christ alone
 "take away our sins, *we* cannot do this with our works; and as
 "it is impossible to embrace Christ, but by faith, it is therefore
 "equally impossible to apprehend him (lay hold on) by works.
 "If then *faith alone* must apprehend Christ, before works can
 "follow, the conclusion is irrefragable, that *faith alone* apprehends
 "him before, and without the consideration of works. And this
 "is our justification and deliverance from sin. Then, and not
 "till then, good works follow faith, as its necessary and inseparable
 "fruit. This is the doctrine I teach; and this the Holy
 "Spirit and Church of the faithful have delivered. In this I will
 "abide. Amen." *

Such, my Brethren, is the definition of *justification by faith only*,
 of the great German Reformer, and no less than this is the doctrine
 of our Church as embodied in her Articles and Homilies. I quote the following from "the Homily of Salvation," because
 our XI. Article directs us to that for a fuller explanation:
 "Justification is not the office of man, but of God; for man cannot
 "make himself righteous by his own works, neither in part,
 "nor in the whole; for that were the greatest arrogancy and
 "presumption of man, that Anti-Christ would set up against
 "God, to affirm that a man might by his own works take away
 "and purge his own sins, and so justify himself. But justification
 "is the office of God only, and is not a thing which we render
 "unto him, but which we receive of him; not which we give to
 "him, but what we take of him of his free mercy, and by the
 "only merits of his most dearly beloved Son, our only Redeemer,
 "Saviour, and Justifier Jesus Christ; so that the true understanding
 "of this doctrine, we be justified freely by faith without works,
 "or that we be justified by faith in Christ only, is not that this
 "our own act to believe in Christ, or this our faith in Christ, which

* See his Life by Middleton.

"is within us, doth justify us, and deserve our justification unto
 "us; (for that were to count ourselves to be justified by some
 "act or virtue that is within ourselves;) but the true under-
 "standing thereof is, that although we hear God's word, and
 "believe it; although we have faith, hope, charity, repentance,
 "dread and fear of God within us, and do never so many works
 "thereunto; yet we must renounce the merit of all our said
 "virtues of faith, hope, charity, and all other virtues and good
 "deeds, which we either have done, shall do, or can do, as things
 "that be far to weak, and insignificant and imperfect, to deserve
 "remission of our sins, and our justification; and therefore we
 "must trust only in God's mercy, and in that sacrifice which our
 "High-Priest and Saviour Christ Jesus, the Son of God once
 "offered for us upon the cross, to obtain thereby God's grace
 "and remission, as well of our original sin in baptism, as well as
 "of all actual sin committed by us after our baptism. * * *
 "This faith the Holy Scripture teacheth, this is the strong rock
 "and foundation of Christian religion; this doctrine all ancient
 "doctors of Christ's Church do approve; this doctrine advanceth
 "and setteth forth the true glory of Christ, and beateth down
 "the vain-glory of man; this whosoever denieth is not to be ac-
 "counted for a Christian man." *

One is not much surprised that the sophist should reject and
 deride this doctrine, for it is not of the world, nor can it be
 understood by the wisdom of this world. The self-righteous
 shrink from it, and have a repugnance to it, because it humbles
 their pride, it exposes their corruption, and their utter inability
 to procure the favour of God by their own good works and
 deservings. The modern Philosopher rejects and ridicules it,
 because it upsets his exalted ideas of himself, his reasoning
 powers, his "vain philosophy" and science "falsely so called,"

* The XI. Article calls it "the Homily of Justification," but there being none of this
 title, no doubt can be entertained that "the Homily of Salvation," was intended.

with which he tries to inoculate all around him, and he will try to employ all his energies to corrupt, if he cannot overthrow, this "faith as once delivered unto the saints."

Let me in conclusion say again, that the justifying faith of which we speak, is a *living principle*, and which in God's people gives expression in deep-seated piety; in energetic activity for the spread of the Gospel, and in philanthropic works of every description, that will in any way tend to promote God's glory and the good of mankind. Nay, this is the touchstone by which we may know ourselves, and be known to others "whether we are in the faith;" whether we are in possession of this "gift of God,"—this living principle—by which faith also, we overcome the world.

Permit me affectionately to enquire: Does *your* faith answer to this description? actually subordinating earthly things to heavenly? Does it give you the victory over the world? enabling you, in some measure at least, to subdue "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life?" Does it inspire you with a holy energy, that is not intimidated before any kind or amount of opposition, in the prosecution of the work of God committed to you? We need hardly say that the possession of a *scriptural faith* is a cardinal necessity, and was never more needful than at the present moment. Satan is still the Christian's adversary; he is as artful and malignant as ever, and the same "fear of man which bringeth a snare," exercises its baneful influence even upon those, whom we cannot but regard as Christian men. Oh that the Spirit of God would be poured out upon us, and endow us all with a living, scriptural faith.

But let me warn you that you do not make a *merit* of faith, as if on that account you have a claim upon God; remember it is only a *mean* not a *cause*,—as Bishop Horsley pointedly remarks: "That we are justified by faith, is not on account of any merit in our

"faith, but because faith is the first principle of that communion between the believer's soul and the divine Spirit, on which the whole of our spiritual life depends." * And as also "the Judicious Hooker" on this point observes: "God justifies the believing man, not for the worthiness of his *belief*, but for the worthiness of Him which is believed." † (i. e. Christ.)

You see, my brethren, how God is graciously influenced in his love,—to pardon a sinner, and receive him into his favor,—*entirely* independent of anything in the creature. Sovereign grace and mercy is the only source from whence we derive all our temporal and spiritual blessings.

No wonder then, that the Gospel which reveals this blessed truth should be called: "The Gospel of the grace of God; the Gospel of salvation; the glorious Gospel, and the Gospel of peace!"

If there be a single soul here, laboring under a misapprehension, as to how a sinner can be just with God; or, a single soul heavy-laden with the oppression of sin, and not clearly understand how to be relieved from this burden—we would direct such to the Apostolic declaration: "By Jesus Christ, *all who believe*, are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses." (Acts xiii. 39).

And you, my brethren, who profess to be in possession of this scriptural faith, be entreated to seek by fervent prayer, the larger acquisition of such a faith; bring it into daily exercise; cherish its fuller development, and constantly resort to the foot of the Cross with the fervent supplication: LORD INCREASE MY FAITH!"

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. AMEN.

* Bishop Horsley's Charge, 1790. † Hooker's Sermon on Justification, Sec. 33.

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